

Enlt250-01 Special Topic Course
Stories of (Dis)location: Chinese Female Subjectivity in Transition
Spring 2002, T & Th 12:30-1:45pm

Prof. Sally McWilliams, Montclair State University

email: mcwilliamss@mail.montclair.edu

Office Hrs: TR 5:00-6:15 pm & by appt

Overview: This course will be a study of how Chinese female subjectivity is constructed from among the overlapping discourses of place, nationalism, transnationalism, family, history, gender, and sexual politics. Our discussion of contemporary narratives by women from mainland China as well as overseas Chinese and Chinese-American communities will examine the effects of political changes, migration, exile, and multiculturalism in concert with gender. We will examine how these narratives raise questions about Chinese origins, memories, desires, and subjectivities in the age of global capitalism and transnational systems of power. Finally we will analyze how the specific forms of writing impact the production of subjectivities that draw upon China as a site of knowledge and our reception of such narratives..

Objectives:

1. To expand the students' understanding of mainland Chinese, diasporic Chinese, and Chinese-American women's literature through exposure to a variety of narratives;
2. To explore the thematic and stylistic concerns of texts created by various contemporary women writers with linkages to China;
3. To aid students in thinking critically about gender, nationalism, history, culture, and subjectivity through a close analysis of texts written by mainland Chinese, overseas Chinese, and Chinese-American women writers;
4. To problematize the image and idea of "China" by investigating the political, socio-economic, historical, cultural, and social pressures implicated in the literary representations;
5. To consider the interpretive implications of reading contemporary Chinese and Chinese diasporic women's literature in dialogue with Chinese-American texts in the U.S. classroom.

Scope:

We will begin with an overview that will include a brief history of: women's contributions to 20th century literary movements in mainland China; patterns of migration and exile to the formation of overseas Chinese communities; and the political, social, and cultural development of Asian American literature, esp. Chinese-American literature. Following this overview, the course will focus mainly on literary texts from mainland China followed by selections from overseas Chinese communities and Chinese-American locales.

Texts (all available at the MSU bookstore; course packet will be provided by the instructor)

Daughter of the River, Hong Ying

The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston

Chaos and All That, Liu Sola

Tracing It Home, Lynn Pan

White Snake and Other Stories, Geling Yan

Mulberry and Peach, Hualing Nieh

Hunger, Lan Samantha Chang

Methods of Evaluation:

Each student will be responsible and held accountable for each of the following course requirements:

1. Preparation for class meetings (i.e., reading and viewing of assigned texts);
2. Participation in large and small group discussions;
3. Regular response papers on topics to be drawn from student-centered discussions (two typed double-spaced pages per paper; total = 4 papers);
4. Participation in one student-led group discussion on a topic related to the study questions for the course (see handout for more details; one paper plus participation in DG);
5. Analytical essay with bibliography based on student’s inquiry into a topic stemming from class discussions
6. Participation in one outside activity (see handout; one 2-page paper).

Grades

Participation (including outside activity)	20%
Discussion Group/Paper	20%
Response Papers	30%
Final Essay	30%

Late Paper Policy:

1. For response papers, you may turn in one paper late without penalty (“late” means the next class session after the original due date). Any subsequent late papers will be dropped one grade point and will only be accepted one class session after the assigned due dates.
2. The final essay and the student-led discussion paper are due on their assigned dates. Please see me in advance of due dates if you have extraordinary complications in meeting the deadlines.

Paper Format: All writing done outside of class must be typed unless I tell you otherwise. Be sure to keep a copy of all the typed work you give me on the off chance that the original is lost.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the presentation of other people's work as your own, whether or not the writer has given you permission. It is never acceptable. Always credit your sources: theorists we’ve read; internet sources you’ve consulted; your peers if you use one of their ideas in your writing. If you are feeling pressured about getting the assigned work done, come and see me **before** you get overwhelmed.

Reading Schedule:

wk 1 1/17 Introduction	wk 10 T, 3/19 <u>The Woman Warrior</u> Th, 3/21 <u>The Woman Warrior</u>
wk 2 T, 1/22 Discuss handouts Th, 1/24 "Love Must Not Be Forgotten"	wk 11 T, 3/26 <u>The Woman Warrior</u> Th, 3/28** DG #2
wk 3 T, 1/29 "A Record" Th, 1/31 "Nu Shu" (video)	wk 12 T, 4/2 <u>Tracing It Home</u> Th, 4/4 <u>Tracing It Home</u>

wk 4 T, 2/5** <u>begin Daughter of the River</u> Th, 2/7 <u>Daughter of the River</u>	wk 13 T, 4/9 <u>Tracing It Home</u> Th, 4/11** DG #3
wk 5 T, 2/12 <u>Daughter of the River</u> Th, 2/14 <u>Chaos and All That</u>	wk 14 T, 4/16 <u>Mulberry and Peach</u> Th, 4/28 <u>Mulberry and Peach</u>
wk 6 T, 2/19 <u>Chaos and All That</u> Th, 2/21 <u>Chaos and All That</u>	wk 15 T, 4/23 <u>Mulberry and Peach</u> Th, 4/25 <u>Mulberry and Peach</u>
wk 7 T, 2/26** <u>begin White Snake</u> Th, 2/28 <u>White Snake</u>	wk 16 T, 4/30** DG #4; outside activity (5/2 designated as a Monday)
wk 8 T, 3/5 <u>Hunger</u> Th, 3/7 <u>Hunger</u>	Final: Friday, May 10 12:45-2:45pm
wk 9 spring vacation	

**** = response papers are due that day!**

Response Papers

Content: These papers will allow you to consider not only *what* you read but *how* you read. You may choose to reflect on specific narrative and/or stylistic choices in the text; you may want to analyze a theme, symbol or character from the text in relation to the issues we discuss; you might consider how the text pushes against ideas you have about Chinese women. After we get going with these, you may find that you want to expand on an earlier idea; feel free to do so in a subsequent response paper.

Form: On the assigned dates, you will bring to class your typed 2 page, double-spaced paper. You should be prepared to either discuss your paper during class or to share it with others in the class. Since these papers are reflective in nature, you may use the first-person when writing. Also you needn't feel like you must have a final conclusion--allow yourself to explore new ideas about narratives, contexts, language, interpretation, and/or knowledge production.

*FYI: You will **NOT** do a response paper for the text associated with your Discussion Group. You should write a total of **four (4) response papers** over the course of the semester.

Evaluation: I will be looking for critical engagement with the assigned materials; your papers should build upon what has already been said in class and add new insights to our investigation of the materials. I will grade these papers: good, +, ok, -. I will average these grades for your final response paper grade.

Discussion Groups

This is a two-part assignment. In addition to the novels/short stories we are reading in class, we are going to read selected contemporary thinkers on the various issues we're discussing this semester. The purpose of these discussion groups is to explore some of theoretical ideas that may help us frame or expand our understanding of the literary texts.

Part I: Discussion Group (in-class)

Content: As a discussion group participant you are to develop an idea that explores one of the issues listed in the "Overview" section of the syllabus. Consider how the literary narrative and article elucidate, complicate and/or challenge the larger questions we've been discussing as a class. All groups may circle back and use previously assigned narrative materials for their discussion.

Here are the essay plus narrative text match-ups:

DG#1 "The World Map of Haunting Dreams" with Chaos and All That

DG#2 "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique with The Woman Warrior

DG#3 "Guest Editors' Introduction" to Asian Transnationalities: Special Issue of Positions with Tracing It Home

DG#4 "The Stakes of Textual Border-Crossing" with Mulberry and Peach

The whole class will have read your article and literary text, so your discussion shouldn't be merely a summary of the article or plot or previous class discussions. Draw out what you think are the most interesting and pertinent ideas to our on-going discussion. Be prepared to ask other participants to share their reactions to your views.

Format: Each DG will be responsible for 30-40 minutes of class discussion. You may cover the material from a variety of angles; remember, however, that this is a discussion not a monologue. Primarily you should try to engage with the other participants in your group, and secondarily with the class as a whole. Each participant is responsible for speaking at least twice during the discussion; you should demonstrate familiarity with the theoretical and literary texts as well as interacting with ideas presented by your peers during the course of the discussion.

Part II: Discussion group paper: Each participant is responsible for a 3-page write-up delineating some of the points you plan to raise during your discussion group. You should discuss not only the material you found of interest but also why you think this material is useful to your reading of the narrative text. Please include appropriate bibliographic information if you do any outside reading. Your write-up is due immediately following your discussion group.

Evaluative Criteria: We will establish the criteria for evaluation as a class. Once we have formalized the criteria, I will give you a handout with the finalized criteria.

Outside Activity

You are responsible for participating in one outside activity over the course of the semester. The activity must be related to our main topic, "**Stories of (Dis)location: Chinese Female Subjectivity in Transition.**" You have a lot of options (and if you find something that I haven't mentioned, then ask me if it's ok to use for your outside activity):

- read an additional book about/by Chinese/overseas Chinese/Chinese American women and write a review of it
- visit the China Institute; write a description and evaluation of what you saw and how it relates to our class
- visit the Asia Society; write a description and evaluation of what you saw and how it relates to our class
- see a film, rent a video by/about Chinese women or the Chinese diaspora; write a review of the film and its gender/sexual/cultural/(trans)national politics
- surf the net and put together an annotated internet resource list on sites relating to Chinese women, gender/sexual politics for women in China, Chinese American women, transnational feminism and China, etc.
- conduct an interview with a Chinese student and discuss some of the issues we've been discussing with her
- trace the presentation of Chinese women in a major newspaper (over the course of several weeks) and write an analysis of the politics of these representations
- collect numerous ads that invoke a sense of "Chinese femininity" and discuss in your paper the politics of representation at work in the ads
- do biographical research into one of our authors and write a biographical piece about her and her work
- study some contemporary artwork by Chinese women or women from the Chinese diaspora or Chinese American women and write an evaluation of the issues their work is addressing

Final Paper

I will give you guidelines on this assignment after we return from spring vacation.

smc 1/02
china/teaching/spring2002/syll02.doc